

Briefing Note 1: Community Observations on the Elephant and Castle Regeneration

29th September 2011

“The Forum is intended to be an opportunity for a wide-range of stakeholders to come together to positively influence the preparation of the masterplan and to express their views on emerging proposals”

Forum Terms of Reference dated 18th July

Open Letter

Sarah Gaventa
Chair of the Elephant & Castle Community Forum

Dear Sarah

Elephant & Castle Regeneration

Residents within the local community have significant concerns on the process for the Heygate / Rodney Road masterplan. The key strategic aspects are summarised in the attached document.

The regeneration will have significant and life-changing effects for the many local communities and people who live and work within the Elephant neighbourhood. With the programme for the consultation and masterplan extremely tight, it is imperative that these concerns are urgently addressed.

We request that these observations are formally included on the Forum Agenda for the meeting on the 6th October.

Yours sincerely

Signed

Jon Dennison, local resident
Marek Drewicz, local resident
Gregory Flynn, local resident and Elephant Amenity Network
Thomas A. Kronig, local resident of Draper House
Jeremy Leach, local resident
Margot Lindsay, Local resident
Robert Loader RIBA, local resident
Guy Mannes Abbott, local resident, Elephant & Castle Urban Forest
Katherine McNeil RIBA, local resident
Simon Mundy RIBA, local resident
Orenda O'Brien Davis, local resident
Seeta Rajani, local resident
Richard Rees, local resident
Richard Reynolds, local resident, Elephant and Castle Urban Forest
Canon Grahame Shaw, local resident

cc

Heygate Office, Soundings
Patrick Diamond, elected member of Southwark Council

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1.0 Introduction

The Elephant and Castle Regeneration is the most significant development for Central London in recent times. This complex and major regeneration will fundamentally change the character of the neighbourhood with long-term implications for the community.

The Regeneration proposals for 2 sites, the Rodney Road and Heygate Masterplans are at 'consultation' phase with second phase proposals due for presentation in October. The detailed planning application for the Rodney Road site and outline application for the Heygate master plan are due to be submitted in March 2012.

The last few months have seen a number of meetings and information distributed by the development team. At present, there is a lack of cohesive proposals available during the consultation. Local people, have major concerns on the transparency of the process and the level and quality of information being provided. The perception, at present, is far from the inclusive exchange which an effective and participatory consultation should deliver.

This briefing note summaries the significant gaps in the process as a collective overview from the perspective of local people.

2.0 Strategic Approach to the Masterplan across the whole SPD area

Lack of clarity of vision for the neighbourhood

Reference to vision is described using generic, rather than place-specific descriptions. Drawings of the masterplan have, to date, been based on the regeneration agreement scheme from summer 2010. This drawing shows a diagrammatic plan, with no massing or contextual information and gives little opportunity for focused commentary.

Lack of cohesion and co-ordination across the regeneration area

Five major sites are under consideration. There appears to be little co-ordination between developers involved and, at present no overall strategy or drawings published which show the regeneration as a whole.

Community and Communication

To date, no reference has been made by the Regeneration Team to the London Borough of Southwark Statement of Community Involvement, Southwark's approved document. The project team do not, at this stage, appear to have a clear strategy on community outreach

There are a number of areas where the process is lacking and include:

- the extremely tight timescale and lack of a clear, detailed process do not allow for effective community engagement.
- information is not freely available and not easily accessible
- little material to focus discussions - a strong feeling that the consultation process is a one-way exchange, with the emphasis on the community providing local information.
- we understand that community engagement will now be further limited with the detailed Heygate masterplan not being available now until November

In summary, a poor example of transparent and inclusive community engagement which is today, considered to be an essential element of regeneration.

Timescale for the adoption of the Elephant & Castle SPD

The extremely short timescale for the adoption process significantly increases the risk that area wide issues will be overlooked.

3.0 Heygate and Rodney Road Proposals

Lack of vision

This refers to a lack of 'sense of place' and clear urban definition of the new neighbourhoods. Proposals have made reference to 'Town Centre' and 'High Street'. The local neighbourhood has both the Elephant shopping centre / market and Walworth Road as local 'hubs', together with the major transport interchange around the Elephant roundabouts. A key feature of the site is the railway along the north western edge.

The proposals available do not indicate any clear urban strategy or connectivity relative to existing pattern, grain and hierarchy, nor draw reference from existing local precedents.

Lack of comprehensive strategic proposals

Consultation material to date has been of a very general nature.

Examples from the public exhibition in July are:

- the model did not show proposals for the Rodney Road and Heygate masterplans
- lack of clarity on regeneration projects within the neighbourhood and urban strategy
- misleading section studies showing towers of 40 storeys
- significant lack of drawn information

Existing trees – the Elephant & Castle Urban Forest

A lack of a comprehensive strategy for the existing mature trees, which cover approximately one third of the site, a unique Urban Forest within Central London. The CAVAT study commissioned by the community estimates the trees at £18million, a valuable local asset. Previous consultation work by Southwark made reference to a large park on the Heygate site. Local residents would like to have clarity on the commitment to providing this park, and securing the legacy of the existing mature Forest.

Lack of adequate contextual description and precedents

There is little to demonstrate that the project team have undertaken a structured and detailed analysis of the context. This suggests that the design team have a limited appointment and scope for this essential element of work. Examples include:

- no detailed context studies to show connections with the existing urban grain
- limited and inaccurate or out of date visuals at consultation liaison groups
- character area studies indicate existing buildings within the development site and lack the existing trees. These describe land use, rather than 'character', with no reference to analysis such as typology, pattern, scale, open space or massing.
- no clear strategy and approach to the existing railway, a significant feature of the site

Hierarchy of scale

The brief effectively doubles the number of dwellings from 1200 to 2500 and will, on this tight site curtilage, require a significant change in scale. This presents a real challenge for the designers within the existing context and achieving successful spaces for the public realm. The strategy for achieving dual aspect dwellings, again with an impact on building form and layout, is not defined. The limited proposals currently available demonstrate:

- a lack of hierarchy of scale of public realm spaces
- absence of an approach to building entrances, frontages, depths and heights
- no description of the scale change between the existing grain and proposals

Impact on existing infrastructure and community facilities

To date, there has been no indication of the impact the new development will have in terms of schools, community and health facilities, waste, transport and traffic movements.

Limited opportunities for social housing

The regeneration proposals describe the project as a “democratic place for all”. The social housing target is set at 25% of the total number of homes, split between social and intermediate rent. With recent changes in rent setting, this will exclude those local to the area.

Car Parking Strategy

Current sustainable development practice within dense urban areas with good public transport connections promotes car free solutions. The proposed car parking provision is unclear, with discussions indicating that there will be a significant number provided.

Lack of detailed proposals for Rodney Road

Information is not yet available on this site, and strategic masterplanning proposals not yet in place. An area of key concern with the detailed planning application due in Spring 2010.

Reference Information

Links

Visioning Document: Summary Report
4th June 2011

<http://elephantamenity.wordpress.com/2011/06/24/visioning-workshop-report/>

Elephant & Castle Urban Forest

<http://elephantandcastleurbanforest.com/>

Elephant Amenity Network Community Website

<http://elephantamenity.wordpress.com/>

Developer Lend Lease Site

www.elephantandcastle.org.uk/

London Borough of Southwark Link

www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200183/elephant_and_castle

Southwark Notes

<http://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/>

Published programme dates: Heygate and Rodney Road

Consultation on the masterplan for the regeneration of the Heygate Estate will be carried out in three stages, as published on the regeneration website:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| - Masterplan principles | July and August |
| - Concept masterplan | September and October |
| - Draft masterplan | November and December |

A parallel process will look at the detailed development of the Rodney Road site over four stages:

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| - Site principles | July |
| - Concept | August |
| - Outline design | September and October |
| - Detailed design | November and December |